

## Cohort ELA-A Contexts

**Bradley Bleck** teaches English literature and composition, both developmental levels and transfer, including Accelerated Learning Project (ALP) classes, at Spokane Falls Community College. SFCC is a primarily liberal arts focused community college where about 75 percent of newly enrolled students intend to transfer to a BA granting institution, most of whom end up at Eastern Washington University. Student populations served by this project include recent high school graduates who are not yet college ready and a variety “nontraditional” students who have either been away from formal education, often either in the military, workforce, or family care context. Some have been either incarcerated or otherwise incapacitated and previously unable to pursue a formal education.

**Lynn Briggs** of Eastern Washington University’s English Department was a participant in the first two years of the project but had to withdraw due to an increase in professional obligations that resulted from a promotion to an administrative position.

**Lesley Hilts** teaches high school English at Deer Park High School. She has taught English I, English II, EWU 170: Introduction to Literature (a concurrent enrollment class and Bridge to College).

**Katie O’Connor** teaches Bridge to College English at Ferris High School in Spokane which is the required English 12 course for students not enrolled in AP classes creating a very diverse population from university bound students to students with IEPs with writing goals as low as 5th grade. Class sizes range from 22 to 28. Survey of students stated approximately 20% are university bound, 60% community college bound, 5% military bound, and remaining students unsure with probability of going to work.

## Cohort Member Backgrounds

### **Bradley Bleck, Spokane Falls Community College**

Bradley has been teaching in community colleges since 1990 or thereabouts after having abandoned pursuit of a secondary teaching certificate. He began teaching as an adjunct in several Seattle area community colleges before moving to Spokane and teaching as an adjunct at SFCC. From there he was hired at the Community College of Southern Nevada in January 1996 based on having developed a fully online, web-based First Year Composition course.

While teaching online and face-to-face computer supported writing and literature classes, Bradley went on to become the Director of Distance Education and later the (interim) Associate Dean of Distance Education serving students and schools ranging over more than 40,000

square miles. Initial distance education efforts were focused on high school students recouping credits but emphasis later shifted to delivering an online Associate of Arts.

Upon returning to SFCC as a tenure track, now tenured, faculty member in 2001, Bradley has been involved in a variety of efforts to bridge the gap students face between high school and college. Some efforts have been informal, inviting high school teachers to workshops and to participate in SFCC's English 101 Portfolio readings and more formal, legislatively supported efforts such as the College Readiness work sponsored by the now defunct Washington Higher Education Coordinating (HEC) Board that was led by William Condon of WSU's English department.

### **Lesley Hilts, Nine Mile Falls High School**

Lesley Hilts has been teaching for over 25 years. She started at the elementary level teaching an integrated sixth grade classroom (she was both the general and special education teacher). From there, she spent two years teaching overseas in Vientiane, Laos at an international school. She taught 6-8 Language Arts, Social Studies and ELL. When she returned stateside, she began teaching English at the high school. Since that time, she has taught English One, English Two, World Cultures, Civics, AP English, EWU 170, Bridge to College and Yearbook.

In 1996, she achieved her Master's in Guidance and Counseling from Whitworth University. She was awarded her National Board Certificate of teaching in Adolescent/Young Adult English Language Arts in 2012 and recertified in 2012. In 2013, she traveled to Morocco, Africa on an IREX grant for Global Education, and in 2014, she completed her Residential Administrative Certificate at Whitworth University.

Throughout her years of teaching, Lesley has been involved in various trainings in reading, writing, language and differentiated. She has been on numerous committees, and she constantly seeks out ways to improve both her teaching and her student's success. Involvement in the SPARKS Grant has been a wonderful opportunity in collaborating between public and higher ed teachers, professors and leaders.

### **Katie O'Connor, Ferris High School**

Katie O'Connor has been teaching in the secondary setting since 1999. She first began her teaching career in Special Education where she was assigned as a resource English teacher teaching all four levels of high school English to students deficient in reading and writing. After four years of teaching, she became the SPED Department Head, where she focused building a more inclusive setting at North Central High School. This endeavor required collaboration with administrators, psychologists, sociologists, district representatives, parents and students. After a year of research and multiple professional development sessions for teachers, North Central High School moved to a more inclusive high school where most students were able to access most general education curriculum with support from both general education and special

education teachers. This work motivated her to obtain her Masters Degree in Reading Instruction and Design.

After three more years of teaching and acting as Department Lead, she decided a change was necessary, so she moved to Ferris High School to teach in the English department. It was there that she was given the opportunity to co-teach with the Special Education teacher and truly learned how much the power of collaboration impacts student learning. This collaboration also provided the motivation to obtain her National Boards Certification and continue to pursue collaborative professional development opportunities where the focus was on directly improving student learning.

Three years ago, she was asked to represent Ferris in the SPARKS Grant and also pilot the new Bridge to College English 12 curriculum. This opportunity is where she learned that cross-sector collaboration is the key to filling the gaps students presented when transferring to post-secondary English courses. She has seen drastic increases in student achievement in her English 12 classes when addressing rhetorical reading and writing because of this collaboration opportunity.

## Problem of Practice

### Problem of Practice Overview

As Katie notes below, our initial Problem of Practice stated, “Students routinely report and demonstrate difficulty integrating the words and ideas of others into their own work. Since academic writing depends on students’ ability to enter an ongoing conversation, this is a significant problem” (2015).

In his essay “What is ‘College-Level’ Writing?” Patrick Sullivan argues that students need to be college-level readers, thinkers, and writers. Each member of Cohort A knew that students often lack the critical and rhetorical reading skills needed to be college and career ready readers, thinkers, and writers. In order that students move through their *Bridge-to-College English 12* course in a way that prepares them for college and career level work, it was determined that before students can effective writers, they need to be effective readers. While much of the evidence is anecdotal and personal, the research of such scholars as Rebecca Moore Howard and her examination of plagiarism and patchwriting found that much of these two problems can be traced to an inability to read rhetorically and critically.

### Bradley Bleck’s Problem of Practice

Bradley teaches both transfer and developmental writing at SFCC and while he has also found that so-called college-ready students are often ineffective readers, this is particularly true of the developmental level students he works with. SFCC instituted an Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) that co-enrolls developmental students with transfer level students while providing a second class session to provide developmental level students extra support to succeed in the

transfer level classes. ALP students are a mix of recent high school graduates, students coming to college after a few years away, and returning adult students, some of whom have been serving in the military.

The challenge was to provide ALP students the reading and writing support needed to be successful in their English 101 course with an emphasis on reading and annotating strategies and practice. The emphasis was on understanding the texts, all of which were above 12th grade reading levels with an intended audience of either high school or college teachers, but generally written in an accessible manner. While each text would never be the sort a student would read of their own volition, they were direct parts of each writing assignment that emphasized an "Introduction to Writing Studies" and "Writing about Writing" curriculum that culminated in students composing a "Theory of Writing" for themselves.

### **Katie O'Connor's Problem of Practice**

Our initial Problem of Practice stated, "Students routinely report and demonstrate difficulty integrating the words and ideas of others into their own work. Since academic writing depends on students' ability to enter an ongoing conversation, this is a significant problem" (2015).

We chose that problem as we began our discussion of skills students needed to transfer from senior English to freshman college courses, specifically writing courses, and the workplace. Through continual conversations, we added that, indeed, it was the lack of rhetorical reading strategies that impeded students' ability to both understand and then integrate words and ideas of others into their own writing. This inability to read rhetorically and transfer their understanding into their own words, we decided, was a major indicator of students who struggled with transitioning from high school to college writing courses.

The evidence we used in our discussions and discoveries were initial samplings of student work where we evaluated skills and deficiencies in all three levels (high school, community college and university) and recorded common issues.

### **Lesley Hilt's Problem of Practice**

Interestingly enough, the problem we identified was also one we are struggling with at our high school. Our English Department has targeted annotation, critical reading, the ability to identify a claim, and smoothly embedding quotes in essays as areas of concern. We specifically chose both annotation and claim identification as the focus of our department S.M.A.R.T goal. As a department, we are scoring pretests and post-tests, trying out various strategies and sharing all of this to find target practices that increase student's ability to read complex texts critically.

## Applicable Common Core State Standards

W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research.

RL.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCRA L 3-5, CCRA R 2-10, CCRA W 1-3, 6, 9 (May be revised)

## Supporting Scholarship

Beach, Richard, Chris Anson, Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch and Thomas Reynolds. *Understanding and Creating Digital Texts: An Activity-Based Approach*. Lanham: Rowan, 2014. Print.

The authors provide a rationale and a number of activities to support the creation of “on-traditional” texts in the writing classroom at the secondary and post-secondary levels.

Connor, Timothy, Ronald Skidmore, Loal Aagaard. “College Student Disposition and Academic Self-Efficacy.” Mid-South Educational Research Association. November 2012. Online.

The research looks at the role of what many would call a “growth mindset” with test results showing that students who have such a mindset are more optimistic about the challenges faced. It is suggested that instructional strategies work to enhance student self-efficacy..

Dennihy, Melissa. “‘Forget What you Learned in High School!’ Bridging the Space between High School and College.” *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*. December 2015. 156-169.

Dennihy examines the issues faced by students and faculty as those faculty seek to prepare students to be successful at both levels.

Driscoll, Dana Lynn and Jennifer Wells. “Beyond Knowledge and Skills: Writing Transfer and the Role of Student Disposition.” *Composition Forum*. 26: Fall 2012. Online.

The role of student disposition in learning is examined with the argument that disposition should be more central to instructional strategies.

Featonby, Amy. “The use of the ‘Teaching as Inquiry Model’ to Develop Student’s Self-efficacy in Literature Response Essay Writing.” *Kairaranga*. 13:1, 2012. 24-35. Online

Year 12 student in England were evaluated with regard to their self-efficacy in a pre- and post-intervention methodology, affirming the positive correlation between student self-efficacy and performance along with some sense that self-efficacy can be taught.

*Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing. Council of Writing Program Administrators.* N.p., Jan. 2011. Web. 15 Sept. 2016.

Framework was used to teach high school students how the habits of mind, specifically metacognitive reflection, influences writing.

Graff, Gerald, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel K. Durst. *"They Say/I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing, with Readings.* New York: W.W. Norton, 2014. Print.

Graff, Birkenstein, and Durst focus providing students with strategies for entering an academic conversation by providing numerous strategies in template form. High school seniors found these templates invaluable for understanding they are indeed entering an academic conversation rather than writing a casual statement where they are supposed to be the experts.

Otten, Nick. "College Board." *AP Central - How and Why to Annotate a Book.* College Board, n.d. Web. 22 Feb. 2017.

Article used to create "Annotating with a Purpose" guidelines for high school students.

"Purposeful Annotation: A "Close Reading" Strategy That Makes Sense to My Students." *Dave Stuart Jr.* Teaching the Core.com, 16 Jan. 2017. Web. 22 Feb. 2017.

Stuart provides numerous strategies and ideas for teaching high school students the annotating with a purpose.

Sullivan, Patrick. "What is 'College-Level' Writing?" *Teaching English in the Two-Year College.* May 2003. 374-390.

Sullivan provides an overview of the issues involved with not only teaching first year writing, but the essay examines the various forces that shape curricular and professional concerns.

The Citation Project: Preventing Plagiarism, Teaching Writing. 12 March 2017  
citationproject.net

Project of Sandra Jamieson, Rebecca Moore Howard, and Tricia C. Serviss direct research projects to help with the teaching of source-based writing that demonstrates information literacy while avoid plagiarism.

"They Say / I Say." *YouTube.* YouTube, 13 Sept. 2015. Web. 22 Feb. 2017.

YouTube channel that summarize the “They Say/I Say” writing strategies. Used as an intervention for embedding quotes into writing.

Wardle, Elizabeth and Doug Downs. “Reflecting Back and Looking Forward: Revisiting ‘Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions’ Five Years On.” *Composition Forum*. 27: Spring 2013. Online.

Wardle and Downs revisit the discussion started by their June 2007 *College Composition and Communication* essay positing First Year Composition as an Introduction to Writing Studies as a curriculum that better fosters learning transfer.

## Scholarship Overview

The general thrust of the scholarship is that what students learn and do in high school matters and that a good deal of it transfer to the college level. The problem is in the disconnect between the pressures and expectations faced by high school teachers (standardized test prep, AP and SAT writing prompts, “writing as performance” in general) as opposed to the greater amount of “writing to learn” that students are expected to engage in at the college level. To be successful writers at any level, students need to be more focused, intentional, and critical readers and need to be taught how to be such a reader.

## Interventions

### Bradley Bleck’s Intervention

#### Intervention

Students are were given a several essays to annotate, but with a particular strategy to annotate for re-statement. The focus of the readings are college level essays, scoring at the 12th grade reading level and higher. Students are provided some reading strategies, primarily previewing and annotating.

Student were asked to read and annotate a relatively short academic text, John Edlund’s “Three Ways to Persuade.” What students did was the baseline with regard to their reading and annotating skills and strategies. Students were also evaluated in terms of the numbers and length of highlighting. This took place early in the 10-week quarter system with students in both college level writing classes, English 101, and students in English 99, the last level of developmental writing. Students read and annotated several more essay through the course of the quarter, with decreasing levels of support. For the final writing assignment of the class, their Portfolio Cover Letter, students were given the first several pages of Ed White’s Portfolios 2.0 to

read and annotate and to use as a guide for their cover letter. These annotations were evaluated in relation to the first set of annotations.

The intervention was to give students a reading strategy for previewing, reading and responding to the text. For this assessment students were asked to engage in restatement annotations only to see whether they were getting the gist of the essay. Students were asked to respond to what they read in their essays but that was not part of the project's focus.

Went with essays from scholarly publications that were above the 12th grade reading level. Building on the focus that if students engage the reading initially and annotate for meaning and understanding, that when they need to come back to the text they need not re-read the material but can simply refer to their annotations.

### **Bradley's Process**

1. Pre-test annotation to establish baseline. Text is John Edlund's "Three Ways to Persuade."
2. Students are given direction on annotation strategies with an emphasis on restatement for understanding and summary. See *Bradley Appendix 1*. Students practice with a short newspaper editorial of a topic of relevance to the course.
3. In-class annotation of test for assignment one. Students work in pairs to annotate just one chunk, usually a paragraph, of the assigned reading. Once one paragraph is completed, they are assigned another until the whole of the essay has been annotated on chunk/paragraph at a time. Done for two essays.
4. Assignment two again has students working in pairs doing shared annotations but with larger chunks, perhaps a section or sub-section of the text at a time as opposed to a paragraph at a time. Again, the annotations are done during class and each student pair shares their work with the rest of the class so the whole class has a complete set of annotations.
5. Assignment three has student assigned to annotate the whole of an essay on their own. As with previous annotation exercises, all annotations are directed to be restatements to indicate that students understand what they are reading. Students are again put in pairs or small groups to compare what each has come up with and to make any adjustments.
6. Post-test annotation activity is completed and compared in relation to pre-test annotations to evaluate for changes in behavior. Text is the section of Ed White's "Portfolios 2.0" addressing the role of portfolio cover letters in the assessment process.

### **Bradley's Intervention Effectiveness**

Bradley evaluated the effectiveness of his intervention with a pre- and post-assessment. The pre-assessment had students read and annotate John Edlund's "Three Ways to Persuade" early in a 10-week course. The post-assessment, a reading and annotation of a part of Ed White's CCC essay "Portfolios 2.0." Bradley collected data that consisted of essays read and annotated by students. During the analysis of the 38 "pre-tests," Bradley became overwhelmed with the workload. Having completed 10, he decided to look at just the post-test for the same 10



students. However, due to the disruption brought on by a windstorm, only 3 of those 10 students completed the post test. It was those three from which the data is drawn. Present analysis is quantitative, but the prose annotations should yield qualitative information when examined.

- Read, annotated and discussed published texts as part of the invention process for each assignment.
- Prior to their final portfolio, students were given an essay to read and annotate as the “post-test.”
- Annotations were then compared with regard to the number and type. The number of highlighting type annotations declined considerably and the prose annotations increased in length from 3.4 to 9.96 words per prose annotation in pilot phase. Annotations also took on more of a complete sentence quality as opposed to sentence fragments.

### **Bradley’s Student Response**

Based on the numbers, students responded well. It may be that they had no real sense of how to annotate before the intervention, but once they had some practice, annotations evolved from simple phrases to something approaching full sentences. Students moved from generally brief sentence fragments to something approximating full sentences in their annotations, indicating greater engagement with and understanding of the text.

### **Bradley’s Changed Thinking**

Bradley’s primary concern is whether students will embrace the newly introduced approach to annotating beyond being required to do so in his classroom. He has observed students who have completed his class reverting to or engaging in behaviors he taught against, such as highlighting large chunks of text as opposed to making restatement annotations. In short, is a 10-week college quarter enough time to ingrain in students the value of annotating as practiced. Similarly, when teaching the second of the two course sequence, can the practice be embedded in that class in a way that would work with students who did not have the experience in the first course, and, at the same time, can a functional way be found that will enable students who did take the first course to build on what they have learned.

### **Intervention Challenges**

Each member of the cohort developed their own intervention as it seemed to best fit their particular circumstances. For instance, Bradley’s students were working with texts that were more written for high school and college English and writing teachers. He asked them to simply restate the content of the material. Katie’s students worked with texts that were written for a more general readership, though that didn’t make them necessarily more accessible as few high school students have practice with book-length nonfiction texts. Katie’s students were asked to provide more in the way of response and commentary on their interaction with the text.

Bradley's primary challenge was integrating the reading and annotation work into instruction in a consistent manner while not hindering progress in lesson plans and assignments. Certain activities had to be either truncated or dropped in order to implement the annotations efforts.

## Intervention Effectiveness

Bradley determined the effectiveness of his intervention by an analysis of the pre- and post-test annotations activities. Along with looking at the quantifiable aspects of the annotations, such as length and sentence structure, the evaluation was based more on more qualitative concerns, such as the accuracy of the re-statements, with whether students went beyond restatement by adding pertinent observations that might find their way into their work. Similarly, a future comparison was based on the data from the work of Rebecca Moore-Howard showing that without strong reading skills, students tend to patch write, so the reduction in this sort of plagiarism in student writing is also something worth examining, as is the place from which students take their sources to include in their work. Moore-Howard's work found that students who are weak readers tend to use material from the first few pages of their sources and stronger readers will use material from later in the text. This sort of an evaluation is certainly worth looking into as it would align with the work of Moore-Howard, hopefully in a correlative way.

## Katie O'Connor's Intervention

### Prompt/Task

Students were to read and purposefully annotate materials to infuse into their writing. Scaffolding was necessary so information is listed below is based on largest impact on learning.

### Design Overview

- Pre-reading and writing, multiple interventions, post-reading and writing over the course of a semester.
- Required reflection on skills and "habits of mind" at the end of each major intervention.
- Same assignments given to 2015-2016 students as a pilot group to gain understanding of which interventions would be most productive. Most interventions listed below were attempted and refined over the course of using twice. NOTE: "The Shallows" editing page was not used last year, and ironically had the largest impact.
- Students were very aware of the process of my working with my cohort, so overt discussions about need for reading and writing improvement was very overt.

### Population

- At Ferris High School, Bridge to College is the required class for seniors, so they are very traditional classes. Approximately 20-30 students varying in levels and abilities from university bound to students with fifth grade reading and writing levels.

## Interventions

1. Students were given an easily accessible text with a request for annotations of text then a written response after reading. First layer of intervention provided no instruction of how or what to annotate for the purpose of collecting an assessment of students' demonstration of "understanding".
2. After completion, students were to reflect on their efforts and explain their understanding of the purpose of and the strategies typically used to "hold thinking" while reading.
3. Students were introduced to "Annotating with a Purpose" (a guide to annotating text based on the purpose for reading) and asked to practice annotations while reading numerous texts throughout the semester.
4. Students were then asked to transfer reading (including significant annotations) into their own writing without instruction of how to do so.
5. Students reflected on what they understand and typically do when asked to "provide evidence" in their writing acknowledging they didn't understand the purpose for annotations because so much of what they were taught was around "text to text", "text to self", and "text to world" which did not address purpose for transitioning to their own writing.
6. Instructional interventions of annotating for the purpose of source integration and commentary on such integration were scaffolded for students over the course of two more units.
7. Realizing students still lacked true understanding of the level of writing expected of them in college courses, they then assessed college level coursework varying between "not college ready", "college ready" and "college level" to develop understanding of college level writing expectations. Once they realized the expectation, they compared their writing to the different levels to evaluate which level they felt best described their writing.
8. Students final demonstration for writing for the semester was a 3-5 page paper discussing the impact the internet has on human learning. They were required to integrate "The Shallows" by Nicholas Carr as the primary source and three additional academic sources to support what they have to say about their chosen topics.
9. Students reflected on their biggest improvements with their writing skills and the most significant interventions used causing improvement.

## Katie's Intervention Effectiveness

Effectiveness was best determined by student writing samples demonstrating integration of annotations and writing skills. Specific interventions below are listed in order of effectiveness toward improvement:

1. Of all of the interventions used, the self-editing checklist in "The Shallows", SREB - Unit 1 (senior English required curriculum), was probably the most effective intervention for students creating a polished piece of writing that did produce their own academic voice. This checklist was long, arduous and quite straining (on students and teachers alike) as

it required a “grit” they were not used to, so they fought the learning process in the beginning. Refusing to allow them to accept their first “final drafts” as their best quality, we worked through the checklist together. I modeled (under the AverVision) on student samples from other class periods, while they worked on their own papers. This made a huge impact on their understanding of what it means to truly “edit and revise” their own writing.

2. Before the final step above, it was obvious students really did not understand they did not have to be the “experts” on their writing topics, they were introduced to “They Say, I Say” quote integration strategies by watching YouTube videos, TSIS Chapters 1-3 ([https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLaQ\\_Ig5h\\_NzumnDcwjassQKBzFmXepk7W](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLaQ_Ig5h_NzumnDcwjassQKBzFmXepk7W)). Students were required to take notes on strategies introduced. Then in conjunction with their notes, and the template provided they were required to improve their body paragraphs demonstrating their understanding of higher quality of using their reading sources.
3. After a few interventions, students still needed improvement with their writing quality, so they were given three different levels of college essays (mentioned above) and asked to score them based on the rubrics we use in class. Once they were finished with their assessment, I shared the actual scores given to the papers by the Bridge to College Cohort. They then had to decide which level their paper would score, and record what improvements were necessary to move them to a minimum of “college ready” level. Those at “college ready” and to assess how to move to “college level”.
4. After a few initial assessments of students’ annotations and writing, it became obvious their ability was not the only issue impeding their success, so we began addressing their “habits of mind” to help them understand what was interfering with their progression. Students read “Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing” and reflected on which “habits” were standing in their way of improvement. This proved very beneficial as students are quite honest with their efforts if given the language to use in their self assessments.
5. Students need clarification on what it truly means to annotate with a purpose rather than just making “text to self”, “text to text” or “text to world” connections, so after doing research, I created “Annotating with a Purpose” for students. Students used this as a guideline for reading and annotating. (See Annotations in Resources).
6. While we were discussing annotating for rhetorical purposes/devices, a student raised his hand and asked me, “Ms. O’Connor, what is a rhetorical device?”. I deferred to the students in class, and they looked at me with wonderment in their eyes. Out of that conversation came the “Rhetorical Devices” sheet for reference. They knew a few (ethos, pathos, logos, theme, and a few others - but not many).
7. Students required rubrics as we continued the reading and writing process, so they not only received reading and writing rubrics for assessments, they also received a “Student Rubric Sheet” where they could record their progress over the course of our units.
8. MLA formatting was also an issue for my student, especially the Works Cited page, so I had each of them download the MLA Sample Paper at OWL@Purdue and save it in their Office 365 account so they had it as a resource and model. Students really fought the formatting process until, I walked them through this site and explained how many writers

(of all levels) use it. During the process, we learned OWL now has a section for high school writers. The students were impressed with that.

## Katie's Student Response (Responses coincide with numbers above.)

1. After seeing the impact the "checklist" had on their writing, students responded very positively to the experience as they saw how their writing improvements made them sound much more collegiate. One student even told me, "O'Connor, this is gold. I'm taking this with me next year." They know (and willingly) accept this is now a required step in the writing process for second semester.
2. Students enjoyed the humor and visuals in the videos to help with their comprehension of "entering the conversation", and were very willing to use the template as it was "kid-user friendly". In their semester reflections, many of them referred to the template as being their biggest "ah ha moment of the year" because they finally felt like they were given permission to be a "grown up in the conversation". One of my hardest working students who definitely struggles with writing, told me this was her "English Bible" for writing now.
3. Students were very intimidated by the "college level" paper when we reviewed them as they felt like they were not ready for college at all. One student told me, "Ms. O'Connor, you make me feel like I'm going to be a failure when I get to college. I'm not ready to write like that." I told her it was October, and we had plenty of time to get her ready, and most importantly, I was going to be there to help and guide her rather than her figure this out on her own next year. She has made huge strides and is approaching "college ready" already with four months of school left. Many students felt similar to her, but they're seeing themselves get closer and after their next paper we'll compare these papers to the those three to see if they've moved themselves up to the next level without any interventions. That would be a huge win. More to come on this! :)
4. Students were quite reluctant to participate in assessing their "habits of mind" in the beginning, but after numerous reflection opportunities, they're starting to see that their success is directly impacted on their attitude toward the work. I'm not sure how effective it has been for most students, but some are realizing the significance of persisting and being open to new learning as they seem to respond to those two habits most frequently.
5. Students informed me they never really knew what to annotate before learning they were supposed to have the purpose guide their annotations. Their responses to reading have definitely become more intentional and focused on their end goal.
6. "Ms. O'Connor, what is a rhetorical device?". That question was such an eye opener to me. My students are constantly reminding me they have six classes to keep track of so if they haven't practiced with the information (rhetorical devices) seven times or so in a school year, they just don't retain the information. A great reminder for repetition.
7. Students at my school will always ask, "where's our rubric" with the initial assessment as they've been so well trained to look at how they'll be assessed before they begin. We

used the “argumentative writing” for pretty much every writing assignment this year as it’s encompasses all writing requirements for essays.

8. MLA Sample Paper at OWL was such an eye opener for my students to understand their teachers weren’t just making up the importance. Multiple students responded, “why didn’t anyone teach us how to use this site before rather than just directed us to use it?”. It was a valid question that I shared with my department as students also teach us what we don’t know! :)

## Katie’s Changed Thinking

Three years ago when I started this journey of collaboration, I was very traditional in my approach to teaching thinking my students would get all they needed by the end of the year, but I didn’t truly believe it was best for students because I was still using the traditional curriculum that has been used in Senior English classes for decades. Now that I’m teaching the Bridge to College curriculum focusing on nonfiction modern topics that engage students, I feel as I’m no longer fighting the “why is this important” battle any longer and am seeing gains like never before. Students understand they need to be global citizens, and the new curriculum helps them analyze and evaluate their role in this global society. Combining the curriculum with the collaboration with the college instructors, my instruction has also become much more transparent to students. We often talk about what is expected of them as they move into postsecondary institutions and realize the more they learn this year, the more success they will experience next year. In addition, they seldom ask “why is this important?” any longer because they understand the skills they are building will be extremely beneficial as they, not only transition to college, but also into adulthood writing as writing is a lifelong skill on which they will depend regularly.

Working with my SPARKS cohort and my Bridge to College cohort has been invaluable because I can say I do know what will be expected of students when they transition to college writing courses, and I know I’ve done the absolute best job I can to prepare them the next phase in their journey.

My final thought of wonderment is that of “what happens next”? I hate to see so much work just end and no follow up provided because there is so much more that could be done to help students transition more successfully.

## Lesley Hilts’ Intervention

- Utilize specific annotation strategies (codes, underlining, commenting) to identify the claim and support in a text.

## Prompt/Task

Reading/writing assignments: Read and annotate a nonfiction, grade appropriate text; identify the author's claim and the evidence to support it.

## Design Overview

- Pre-test (November)
- 9-10 text: Basic English (two classes) English One (Five classes); English Two (four classes). 11-12 text: English Three (three classes); EWU 170: Intro to Literature (one class); Bridge to College (three classes).
- English Department group assessment of pre-tests including the creation of a reliable rubric and anchor texts.
- Intervention (series of lessons to teach annotation, rhetorical strategies, claims and evidence/elaboration)
- Post-test (February)
- 9-10 text: Basic English (two classes) English One (Five classes); English Two (four classes). 11-12 text: English Three (three classes); EWU 170: Intro to Literature (one class); Bridge to College (three classes).
- English Cohort group assessment of pre-tests including the creation of a reliable rubric and anchor texts.

## Population

- LAP and IEP students
- Honors students
- General Education students

## Lesley's Intervention Effectiveness

There were two ways that I determined the effectiveness of the intervention: 1) Students needed to annotate and show evidence that they understood their annotations through either writing a specific code or writing notation. Nothing could be highlighted or underlined without a code or writing. I assessed their annotations using a rubric score. 2) Students needed to correctly identify the author's claim and provide a minimum of three pieces of evidence to support the claim. I also used a rubric score to rate both their pretests and their post tests.

- The initial pretest introduced a text for their grade level - 9/10 or 11/12. They were giving minimal instruction other than to annotate and then find the claim and evidence.

## Interventions:

- Students were taught specific strategies for annotation. They were required to put a text code or written note by everything that they annotated.
- I provided the students with specific questions and strategies for annotating. We practiced this together before I had them annotate on their own.

- I provided them with the following annotation rubric:

Annotation Rubric:

4 - Stupendous: Numerous connections, notations, comments; underlining and highlighting is purposeful and used to glean meaning from the text as well as to read between the lines; close attention paid to text; digs deep.

3 - Adequate: Several connections, notations, comments, close attention paid to text; underlining or highlighting is purposeful; digs a little beneath the surface.

2 - Average: One or two basic connections, notations, comments; relies heavily on underlining or highlighting most of the text; cursory attention paid to text; scratches the surface.

1 - Poor: No or few connections or notations; no or few comments; mostly underlined or highlighted; little attention paid to text; sits on the surface and hopes for inspiration from the gods.

- I frequently collected their annotated texts and read through them to see that they were actually using the annotations to increase their understanding of the text, not just jump through a hoop or randomly underline.
- When annotating the text was not possible (ie, a textbook), I utilized Cornell Notes and had the students write down specific quotes from the text along with why they thought that particular quote was important or meaningful. I then had students randomly share. They frequently impressed me with the quotes they chose and the depth of their response to the quote. This is the one activity where I have really seen them make a connection to the text.
- I also had students write short paragraphs, constructed responses and an essay using the quotes they found while annotating. This helped them have a purpose for both reading and annotating the text.
- The students were then able to utilize annotation to identify the author's claim and the specific evidence to support that claim (quotes).

## Lesley's Student Responses

- Some students responded really well to the intervention and quickly became adept at effectively annotating a text. Others struggled with understanding the importance of annotation and why it helped increase their understanding of the text.
- Those that struggled with annotating the text, however, responded well to mining for quotes and explaining why they picked the quote (Cornell Notes).
- Students continue to struggle with finding the author's claim. While they did reasonably well with claims positioned in the first part of the text, identifying implied claims and claims positioned towards the end of the text were often problematic



## Lesley's Changed Thinking

- I have really appreciated the conversations, collaboration and insights share by my colleagues in the SPARKS group. I have adapted some of their strategies and suggestions to further help my students understand complex texts.
- I think the most meaningful insight I have gained is that even at the college level, students often do not transfer strategies and skills from one class to the next. We see this often at the secondary level, and I wonder how to increase the level of transference.
- I wonder how I can make annotation meaningful for all students so that they see it as a way to interact meaningfully with the text.
- I wonder if there are some better strategies for helping students find the claim in a more complex text. This is the one area where I feel I still need to do more research and work. Even my advanced seniors seem to struggle with identifying an implied or less obvious claim.